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ABSTRACT

The methods and activities involved in running a successful family day care center are the focus of the article. Legal requirements, nutrition, teaching techniques, and the recruitment of a family day care mother are reviewed. Desired characteristics of the family day care mother, and for her pre- and inservice training are also discussed. Outlines for content areas for a training curriculum for family day care mothers, a typical schedule of daily activities, an outline of number concepts designed to familiarize children with situations involving the use of number concepts, and resources for field trips are appended. (NH)

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How to Succeed with FAMILY DAY CARE

MARIE A. HAMBERG. About 6 percent of the children of working mothers are in conventional day care centers, according to the Department of Labor. Forty percent are cared for in the home of a relative or friend; 51 percent are cared for in their own homes by an older brother, sister, or friend, or are left on their own. Most of these children live in areas where there is a great need for more child care facilities and where the working mother cannot afford paid care in or out of her home.

A solution to the problem posed by the 91 percent is the establishment of family day care centers organized by public, private, and voluntary social service agencies but run in homes in areas most in need.

These home centers can help meet the needs of infants, preschool, and school-aged children whose parents are absent during the day. The centers can also provide job opportunities for the persons who organize and run them.

The family day care setting is usually more informal and less structured than a day care center. It is similar to the environment of a normal home.

The children play, eat, rest, and participate in educational activities, as if they were in their own homes. They also receive the individual attention of the day care mother. At the same time, the mother is able to carry out many of her own daily household tasks.

In the past, family day care has usually been only an informal arrangement between parents and a neighbor or friend. Today, good family day care should be developed and supervised by, or under the auspices of, an agency or organization knowledgeable about children. This agency or organization may be a State agency, Model Cities program, Community Action agency, or other public, private, or voluntary group; individual private citizens may also qualify to act as such an "agency."

Arrangements for family day care services may be made by parents, guardians, a social service agency, or other responsible agency such as a family or juvenile court.

Fees for family day care services vary from State to State, depending, to some extent, on the individual State's overall expenditure for day care services. These fees may be paid by the parents or the sponsoring agency directly to the family day care mother or to a public, voluntary, or proprietary organization providing the services through contract or other arrangements.

If the natural mother is participating in a training program (Work Incentive Program, Concentrated Employment Program, Neighborhood Youth Corps, or other manpower training program), these fees may be paid by the agency.

A federally approved and supported family day care home may serve no more than six children of 3 through 14 years of age, or no more than five children (including the mother's own children) of infancy through age 6.

Laws require family day care homes to be licensed to protect children from

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all types of hazards. The home must meet certain physical standards developed by the licensing authority of the State or Federal funding agency.

The home should have adequate and safe indoor space for free play, eating, and other purposes; adequate heating and ventilation; adequate sleeping facilities for napping; and safe and sanitary outdoor space. Approval of these homes is required by fire departments, health departments, and building inspection departments where local ordinances apply.

Few rules or laws exist, however, for meeting the nutritional needs of children in family day care. Sponsoring agencies should insure that these children are provided adequate, nutritious meals.

In some areas, agencies are using the "satellite" food service program in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Under this program, a centralized kitchen serves as the base for preparation of all meals, which are then delivered to the family day care homes. This method allows the family day care mother to spend more time with the children, and the operating agency is able to control the type of nutrition the children receive.

Appropriate toys, games, books, and other materials should be available to enhance the educational development and creative experiences of children in family day care. But the mother's own imagination can be the most important teaching instrument.

For example, the day care mother can teach differences in taste during snack time. Number concepts can be taught using chairs, windows, or other furniture. The kitchen can be used as the focal point for most science activities; the bathroom, for personal hygiene.

In some cities, volunteers or family day care mothers take children to neighborhood parks, playgrounds, or centers to participate in recreational activities, creative arts, crafts, and tutoring. Environmental sessions may also be held in which the children are made more aware of their neighborhood and its resources through field trips, films, and lectures.

The sponsoring agency must assure that family day care children receive immunizations and all necessary medical and dental care and social services as needed. On the other hand, the day care mother should be fully informed of any problems among the children.

If possible, the day care home should be located in or near the neighborhood of families using the service. For the school-age child, the family day care home may serve as a day-time base of activity and thus help keep his roots in his own neighborhood.

Recruitment of family day care mothers can be handled in a variety of ways. The agency should become familiar with the particular neighborhood to be served. In some instances, the agency service worker may already be well acquainted with the neighborhood, its residents, and resources. In any case, the agency must make an assessment of the day care needs, community resources, and the potential to fulfill these needs.

After the assessment is completed, the actual recruitment can begin. A brief description of the family day care program is needed. This should include the program's purpose and goals, duties and responsibilities of day care mothers, the sponsoring agency, and the contact person for further information.

Information can be sent out through fliers, brochures, pamphlets, or leaflets to numerous places (local drugstores, supermarkets, public schools, health clinics, doctors' offices, churches, and community centers). Presentations to interested residents, former foster parents, and other groups may be made.

To widen its contacts, an agency may wish to solicit help from other federally sponsored programs such as Model Cities, Community Action programs, and employment services in seeking prospective day care mothers. Advertisements may also be placed in the classified section of local newspapers or time may be purchased on local radio and television stations.

Agency service workers can play a key role in identifying potential family day care mothers. Their casework files generally contain records of present, potential, and former public assistance recipients who need employment, have been good parents themselves, and who may be needed at home to care for their own children.

Word of mouth is always a primary method of recruitment. Family day care mothers tell their friends of the advantages of the program and elicit their interest in running a family center. Many new day care mothers have been recruited in this fashion.

Generally, family day care mothers are low-income mothers who provide child care for other low-income families. The family day care mother must not have other paid employment or provide care to children other than the day care children placed under her supervision.

Visits to the home to assess the total family situation should be conducted by a worker from the operating agency. The worker can evaluate the physical and social functioning of the family, family patterns and relationships, financial situations and needs, environmental factors, and the mother's relationship with her own children. The worker can also determine approximately how many children can actively be served in the home. Through these visits, the worker can determine whether or not the home meets the licensing requirements.

Two major factors to consider in selecting the family day care parent are her desire to work with children and her interest in participating in upgrading the quality of child care.

When a potential family day care mother has indicated interest in the program, careful screening by the agency must follow to determine whether she is right for the job.

The family day care mother should be a kind, responsible person who possesses a genuine liking for children and who has knowledge of their needs and problems. In addition, she should be flexible

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and patient, possess a real desire to work with children, and be able to handle emergency situations well.

The family day care mother should be of suitable age and temperament to care for the children in her home. She must be in good physical and mental health. All other family members must be free of communicable diseases. In some States, chest X-rays, immunization records, and other medical data are required of licensees.

Family day care mothers may be of

varied educational backgrounds, from different economic groups, and range in age from young married women to senior citizens. The day care mother must be able to read, write, and speak reasonably well. (She may have to be bilingual, also, depending on the ethnic background of the children.) This is necessary in order for her to read stories to the children, communicate effectively with them, their parents, and with agency representatives.

A high school diploma or its equivalent is desired but ought not to be required. However, the mother must be willing to take training and direction.

Program developers should realize the importance of providing family day care mothers with training. "Training" as used here is defined as an opportunity for the mother and the agency to match strengths brought by each. Both bring a particular understanding of child development and of the needs of children.

Often the unique contribution of the experienced mother adds to the knowledge of the group as experiences are shared with other mothers. Training gives the mothers a chance to explore new and different ways of handling situations and to study current ideas in child development.

Training should be provided to all family day care mothers before children are placed in their homes and on a regular basis thereafter. The extent of pre-employment training may vary, depending on the manpower and financial resources of the operating agency. Some sessions may be as long as six weeks prior to the opening of the center; others may be as brief as one week. In some instances there will be no pre-employment training at all. In these cases a vital inservice program is imperative.

Homes operated by agencies that sponsor longer initial training periods will probably have fewer problems with the children and mothers adjusting to the new experience. After the day care mother begins to care for children, a field worker assigned by the sponsoring agency should make several visits to the home weekly to check the mother's progress. If there are problems, community resources and consultants (social workers, child development specialists, home economists) should be called upon to assist the mother. Such consultant resources should be available later for continuous use as a training mechanism.

Inservice training may be provided in the home on an individual or group basis and out of the home in neighborhood group meetings (as in the photo on this page, taken in Boston). These sessions may be held in the evening to discuss day care problems and demonstrate and present new materials. Field trips to day care centers, health units, and other community resources are also recommended. These give the day care mother an opportunity to see other types of child services and to find out what services are available to her.

Several training methods such as discussions, lectures, group projects, field trips, demonstrations, workshops, and audio-visual aids are applicable to preemployment and inservice training. The agency should explore the methods that best meet the needs of the participants and that accomplish its goals.

Agencies with limited staff resources may train persons as day care aides, day care counselors, teacher-mothers, or teacher assistants to go into the day care homes to assist in carrying out educational activities. Each person should be assigned a given number of homes to visit each day or week. Some of their duties would include recruiting mothers for the program, assisting a day care mother in filling out attendance records and progress reports, serving as a substitute when a day care mother has medical appointments or in emergency situations, and assisting with field trips and other educational activities.

At its best, the family day care mother and her home can provide the child with affectionate, protective care, the companionship of children, educational experiences, and an environment that can nurture development. **IN**

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APPENDIX

Suggested Content Areas for Training Curriculum for Family Day Care Mothers

Basic Needs of the Child

- Emotional and physical security
- Sense of belonging
- Nourishment
- Emotional and physical well-being
- Mental growth and development
- Discipline and training

Responsibilities of the Day Care Mother

- Home management
- Planning household duties
- Food preparation and service
- Meeting the emotional, mental, social, and physical needs of the child
- Encouraging child growth and development
- Guiding children's behavior
- Maintaining relationships with natural parents
- Initiating and carrying out creative activities
- Participating in training programs
- Knowledge of community resources

Health

- First aid (basics)
- Safety
- Protection from hazards
- Recognizing childhood illnesses
- Personal hygiene
- How to handle emergencies

Points of Emphasis

- Development of wholesome self-concepts
- Discipline vs. punishment
- Importance of individual differences
- Relationships with natural parents
- Self-improvement through training
- Laws affecting the job (licensing requirements, etc.)
- Language development
- Stimulation
- Agency policies and procedures
- Qualities of a good employee
- Employee-employer relationships

Typical Schedule of Daily Activities in a Family Day Care Home

Day Duties

6:15 a.m.	Mother awakens and begins routine activities.
6:50 a.m.	First day care child arrives.
7:00 a.m.	Breakfast is served to family (including day care child).
7:30 a.m.	Husband leaves; takes own children to school.
7:40 a.m.	Two other day care children arrive (breakfast is given).
7:45 a.m.	Family day care mother sets up playroom.
8:00-9:30 a.m.	Morning free play period.
9:30-10 a.m.	Clean-up period.
10:00-10:15 a.m.	Storytime.
10:15-10:45 a.m.	Mother and children prepare for walk.
10:45-11:15 a.m.	Mother takes children on walk; picks up children from school.
11:30 a.m.	All return home; children engage in free play while lunch is being prepared.
12 noon	Lunch is served.
12:30-1:45 p.m.	Naptime.
1:45-2:15 p.m.	Children are awakened, toileted; diaper changes, etc.
2:15-3:00 p.m.	Educational activities (painting, games, music, finger plays, role playing, etc.).
3:00-3:30 p.m.	Afternoon snack.
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Watch Sesame Street on T.V.
4:30-5:30 p.m.	Free play.
5:00 p.m.	Two day care children leave; third day care child continues free play.
5:30 p.m.	Third day care child leaves.
5:30-5:45 p.m.	Mother cleans up play area.

Night Duties

Plan menus for next day.
Plan and gather materials for educational activities.
Attend training session (when held).

Handbook for Kindergarten School, City of Richmond, Ind.

Number Concepts

The purpose at this level is not mastery of facts or skills but rather acquaintence with situations involving the use of number.

The following outline may help to summarize the experiences to be provided:

I. Vocabulary and Fundamental Knowledge

A. Time Concepts
1. A long time, a short time, etc.
2. Soon, now, never, before, after, etc.
3. Morning, noon, afternoon, evening, etc.
4. Days of the week
5. Name of the current month
6. Seasons of the year
7. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, etc.
8. Reading the calendar

B. Location Concepts
1. Up and down
2. Above, bottom, middle, etc.
3. Top, bottom, middle, etc.
4. Front, behind, beside, between, etc.

C. Distance Concepts
1. Far and near
2. A long way, etc.
3. Walking distance, driving distance, etc.

D. Speed Concepts
1. Slow, slower, slowest
2. Fast, faster, fastest

E. Size Concepts
1. Big, bigger, biggest
2. Large, larger, largest
3. Small, smaller, smallest
4. Big, large, huge, etc.
5. Small, little, tiny, wee, etc.

F. Quantity Concepts
1. All, more, some, etc.
2. More, most, etc.
3. Few, many, every, several, etc.

II. Money Concepts

A. A knowledge of simple coins
1. Penny
2. Nickel
3. Dime

B. Comparison of Money Values
1. A nickel will buy more than a penny
2. A dime will buy more than a nickel or a penny

III. Use of Numbers for Counting and Computing

A. Counting simple objects, people, etc., to find out how many
B. Recognizing half an object

Resources for Field Trips

(Add your own ideas)

In Your Locality

Supermarket
Fire station
Police station
Service station
Library
Department store
Post office
Walk through the neighborhood
Visit a nearby farm

In Your Community

Court house
Dairy
Airport
Train station and ride
Bus station and ride
The square
Florist or nursery
Weather station

Recreation and Nature

Parks
Zoo
Lakes

Historical

Churches
Outstanding homes
Landmarks
Monuments

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